

211-33 COLUMBIA COURT (Rowhouse)  
Jeannette  
Westmoreland County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-6104

HABS  
PA  
65-JEAN,  
9-

PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
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ADDENDUM TO:  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### 211-33 COLUMBIA COURT (ROWHOUSE)

HABS No. PA-6104

- LOCATION: 211-33 Columbia Court, Jeannette, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania
- SIGNIFICANCE: A high concentration of window, tableware, bottle and specialty glass plants distinguished Jeannette as "The Glass City" early in its history. Significant housing stock consists of company-built row and detached double houses, and several privately constructed dwellings.

#### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The lot on which these row houses are built appears to be left over from a surveying error, or rather a lack of surveying error. When H. Sellers McKee annexed his first addition to the city of Jeannette, the map he submitted to the county was apparently prepared without the services of a surveyor and misrepresented the adjacent, previously platted lots along South Sixth Street. The result was that when McKee sold off all his lots in the addition, he still owned a strip of land measuring approximately 40' x 208'. The property was never defined as a lot, and it appears in the 1907 tax book under the heading of "unknown lots" with no party being assessed that year. In fact, the owner was the National Glass Company to which McKee had sold his glass company and remaining real estate holdings in 1899. National Glass used the real estate as collateral for loans it took out prior to going bankrupt in 1907. This parcel and most of the other property remained under the control of the succeeding McKee Glass Company and was later owned by the company president, A.J. Smith. An alley measuring approximately 16' wide appears on the 1910 map, and Smith built the row houses on the remaining 24' strip of land in 1916.

In the late 1980s, there were still two long-term residents living in Columbia Court. Mrs. Marie Watson owned the more elaborate end unit on Bullitt Avenue, No. 233. She moved here with her parents, Ezra and Myrtle Copper in 1919. Her father worked in the window house as a flattener and later for McKee Glass. In all, the couple had seven children, five of whom survived into childhood. Marie later married Willis Watson, and after her father passed away, the couple and their family moved back into the house with Myrtle. At about the same time (1950-51), Myrtle purchased the unit from Sachs Realty. Willis Watson worked for the Elliot Company as a turbine builder, and Marie worked in the home raising their ten children.

Gordon Reichen, at the time of the writing of this report, owned the unit at the other end of the row, No. 211. Gordon moved here with his mother Sarah in 1939 while he was working as a grinder at McKee Glass. At the time, he made \$23 a week at McKee's and \$5 was deducted for rent. Gordon's father William (who passed away in 1938) had worked at the window house. Gordon also began work there breaking-off glass before going in to the armed services in 1941. He was in the service for four years, and when he came back he had his choice of departments in the window house. Gordon chose the warehouse, and altogether, including credit for time in the service, he worked at the company for thirty-seven years.

During the time that A.J. Smith owned Columbia Court, the McKee Realty rental preference was given to McKee Glass employees. Some units were rented to persons employed outside the glass works, though. The 1928 City Directory shows four units vacant, as well as households headed by a cobbler and a barber. A 1948 directory lists two units as vacant another four units with household heads working at McKee Glass. Another three residents, including Gordon Reichen, worked for other glass companies. The remaining two household heads worked at the Elliot Company and as a machinist, respectively.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

This group of twelve row houses dating to 1916 fronts an alley behind the Colombe Hotel. Each unit measures approximately 17' x 24', with the exception of one larger and more ornate house anchoring the row on Bullitt Avenue. Each unit, including the larger end unit, is rectangular in plan and has four rooms, two per floor. The facades of the symmetrically paired units have vertically-aligned windows and adjacent entry doors. The only ornamentation is at the top where corbelled brackets denote the division between houses, and a simple projecting wood cornice above decorative brick bands terminates the brick-veneer wall. The street facing unit has a more elaborate corbelled-brick cornice under a finished stone cap. Some of the units are now two apartments.

## PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

*Insurance Maps of Jeannette, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania.* New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1916, 1925.

Deed Books. Recorder of Deeds, Westmoreland County Courthouse, Greensburg, Pennsylvania, 481/461, 554/454, 555/153, 689/16, 721/171, 1393/265. For No. 211, see 2033/29, 2117/725. For No. 233, see 2018/627, 2546/314.

City Directories, 1923, 1928, 1948, 1960.

Tax Assessment Books. Westmoreland County Tax Assessment Office, Westmoreland County Courthouse, Greensburg, Pennsylvania.

#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

In February 1987, the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) and the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) began a multi-year historical and architectural documentation project in southwestern Pennsylvania. Carried out in conjunction with America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), HABS and HAER undertook a comprehensive documentation of Jeannette, documenting industries, housing and cultural institutions.